

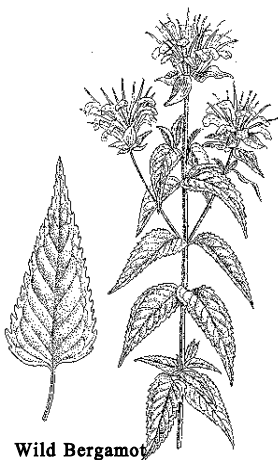
Spring has rapidly moved into summer on the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve. Big Bluestem and the rare Indian Grass, already over five feet high in places, are waving their flowering heads. The young Sandhill Cranes have joined their parents in flight and family groups of three or four are now a common sight around the preserve. The young ones can be distinguished from their parents by their reddish colour.



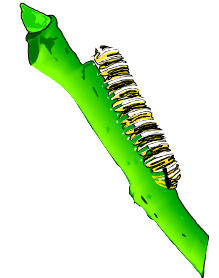
The endangered Western Prairie Fringed Orchid started blooming on June 19 - earlier than usual. The small area between Vita and Stuartburn (less than 45 square miles) is the only place in Canada where this spectacular orchid can be seen. To find out what condition these flowers are in, call the Tall Grass Prairie Headquarters at 425-3229.

Many interesting flowers are now blooming. Look for the rare Culver's-root, a tall plant with leaves in whorls of four or five and a tall spike of pure white flowers. Be sure to stop and smell the flowers - especially the "chocolate", or tuberous-rooted, sunflower.

Wild Bergamot, with its scraggly-looking head of magenta flowers and Giant Hyssop, which produces a spike of blue flowers, should be seen as well as smelled. Their square stems (roll them between your fingers) and opposite



leaves are characteristic of mint family members. Rub the leaves of these plants to experience the hot, spicy smell of the Wild Bergamot and the pleasant licorice-like aroma of the Giant Hyssop. Both of these plants have a history of use as cold or flu remedies.



The milkweeds are in full flower and it is time to look for Monarch caterpillars on the leaves and flowers. The adults migrate from Mexico and Brazil to lay their eggs on northern milkweeds. The change from egg to butterfly takes about four weeks and the Monarchs that develop in Manitoba will fly south to produce the next generation of butterflies.

This year's bird banding project has resulted in the recapture of songbirds that were banded last year, indicating breeding success and survival. Songbirds that experience a season of successful breeding and survival, where at least one of the young reaches maturity, will return to the same location the following year. However, if a nest is destroyed by predators or adverse environmental conditions, for example flooding, a new and safer breeding territory will be sought out the following year.

Disturbed ant hills and overturned logs are a clear sign that a bear has been in the area. A sugary, black powder is found in the abdomen of ants, making them a popular food source among insect-eaters. At one time, the tall grass prairie was home to both Black Bears and Plains Grizzlies. However, the Plains Grizzly is now extinct due to the loss of its prairie habitat.

If you see anything of special interest, be it bizarre animal behaviour or a patch of rare or peculiar plants, please let us know by calling 204-425-3229. Any information we receive is recorded and may be an asset to our research. This year, we have already recorded two new species of plants, including the Spotted Coralroot orchid.

## Upcoming Events

- August 8 - Prairie Day.  
Join us as we explore the natural history of this endangered habitat

(for information call 425-3041)

For more information about the cultural history of the Preserve area, visitors may wish to stop by the Gardenton Ukrainian Museum and St. Michael's Church.

## Tall Grass Prairie Guided Walks

2:00 pm

Every Wednesday & Sunday in July & August

Meet at the Prairie Shore Trail,

2 miles east of Tolstoi on PR 209

For more information call: 204-425-3229

*The Preserve was established to protect and conserve the native species found there.*

*Please do not pick, dig or collect any of the plants or animals.*

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# Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve

*Prairie  
Ponders  
July/August 1998*

**Critical**  
Wildlife Habitat Program